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Wendy Salmond

Chapman University, [salmond@chapman.edu](mailto:salmond@chapman.edu)

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# 8



## Pavel Tretiakov's Icons

WENDY SALMOND

“What for some is the heights, the depths, enchantment, perfection, for others is decline and disintegration.”

—A. Grishchenko, *Voprosy zhivopisi*<sup>1</sup>

Between 1890 and his death in 1898, the Moscow art collector Pavel Tretiakov acquired sixty-two icons of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. With this comparatively late entry into the world of icons, Tretiakov laid the foundation for one of the world's greatest collections of medieval Russian paintings. Why is it, then, that Tretiakov's icons are today so rarely mentioned and so hard to find? The most practical explanation is that they were simply swallowed up into the vast repositories of the reorganized State Tretiakov Gallery in 1930, along with thousands of icons from churches and private collections nationalized after 1917. As a result, locating them in the gallery's catalogue is a painstaking task and finding images of them a challenge.<sup>2</sup> A more complicated reason is that the icons that Tretiakov chose—the very best money could buy in the 1890s—quickly became old-fashioned and aesthetically devalued in the next century. Beginning around 1905, as fifteenth-century icons were discovered and cleaned, icon painting's Golden Age was moved several centuries back in time, from the court culture of the Muscovite state and the first Romanov tsars to Republican Novgorod. Tretiakov's icons were caught up in this process of reevaluation, victims of a revolution in aesthetic criteria fought along generational lines.

### Creating the Collection (1890–1898)

In the early 1890s, when Tretiakov made his first acquisitions, Russia was full of medieval icons, but for most educated people they were for all intents and purposes invisible. The devotional practice of periodically repainting icons and adorning them with new metal covers (*oklady*) meant that beneath an image of quite recent production, several much older versions of the same subject might well be concealed. Even in this disguised form, however, icons of any appreciable age had long since begun to disappear from daily use. In many churches (particularly in urban centers and on gentry estates) and in private homes, it was increasingly unusual to find any dating back earlier than the eighteenth century. Peter the Great's importation of Western cultural values from around 1700 had made it an act of enlightened piety and good taste to replace old iconostases with shiny new Baroque ones, to whitewash over frescoes, and in general to improve the grandeur of churches by a process of continued renovation.

Rather than being destroyed, decommissioned church icons were typically left by a pious clergy to molder in bell towers and outbuildings, remaining there until the massive collecting boom that began after 1905. But in the nineteenth century many smaller icons became the jealously guarded property of the Old Believer community. Patriarch Nikon's reform

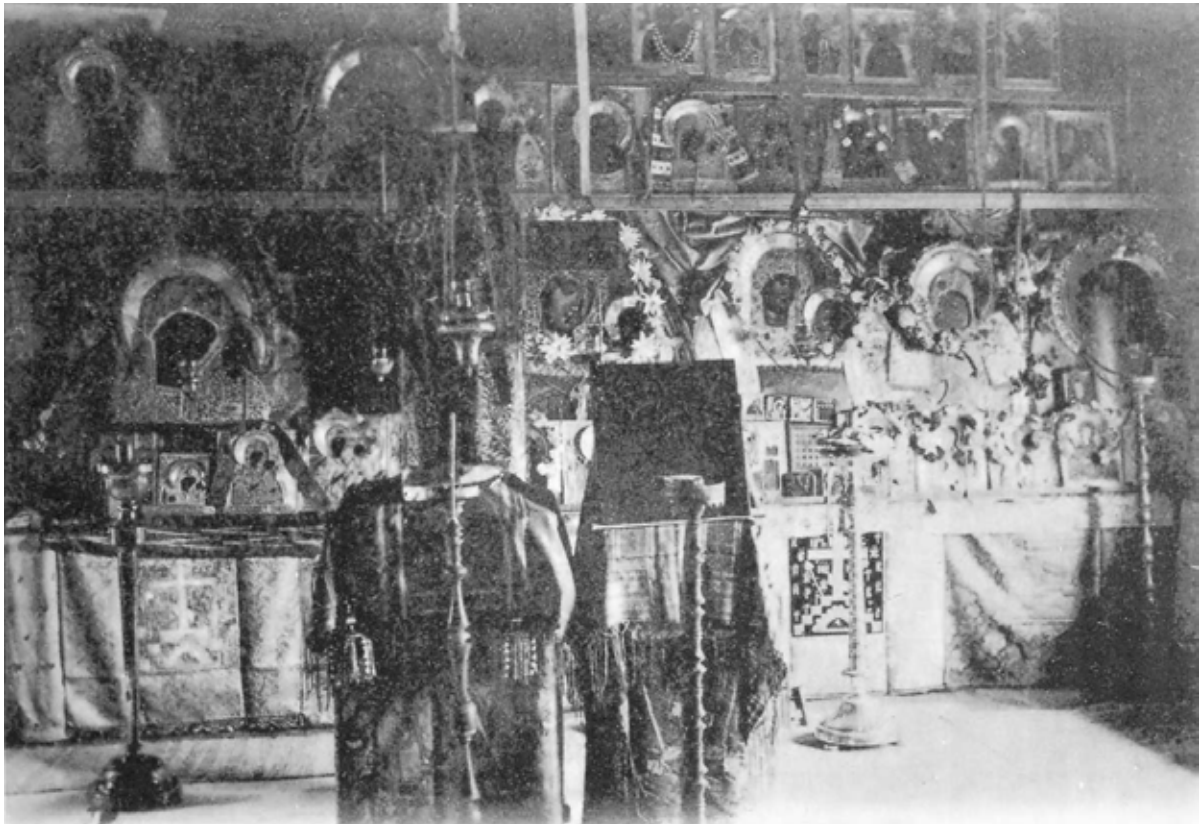
of Russian Orthodox Church ritual in the 1650s split the population into those who followed the official, reformed Orthodox Church and the adherents of the so-called Old Belief, who rejected its authority. In the wake of these reforms, this second group filled their prayer rooms with icons painted before the world as they knew it came to an end (fig. 8.1). Old Believers became the guardians of all extant knowledge about the icon's history, while their icons became the most visible symbols of Old Rus. Skilled in emulating the many styles of pre-Nikonian icon painting, they were the logical choices to repair or restore important old icons for the official church and often used the opportunity to "rescue" them, leaving an exact copy in their place. Old Believers also dominated the antiquarian trade, which flourished during the nationalistic nineteenth century, and their reputation as both connoisseurs and connemen willing to fleece unwary collectors was celebrated in the popular stories of Nikolai Leskov and Pavel Melnikov-Pecherskii.<sup>3</sup>

Over time a distinctive Old Believer aesthetic developed that profoundly influenced the first collectors and historians of icons in the mid-nineteenth century. Of necessity their icons were small and often took the form of miniature portable iconostases and triptych shrines; as they were forbidden to worship in their own churches and were periodically in flight from official persecution, Old Believers had little use for large icons. The fifteenth-century icons produced in Novgorod the Great or attributed to the monk Andrei Rublev were revered, but only dimly understood beneath their layers of overpainting, and so it was almost entirely Muscovite icons that shaped Old Believer taste—icons that had witnessed the reigns of Ivan the Terrible (r. 1533–1584) and Boris Godunov (r. 1598–1605), the ensuing Time of Troubles, and the creation of the Romanov dynasty in 1613. Favored subjects and styles were those in vogue during this turbulent period of Russian history: complicated scenes of many figures, abstruse didactic and allegorical themes, miniature painting of great virtuosity and decorative beauty, somber in color but enlivened by gold highlights and patterns, with frames and adornments of chased silver, filigree, and enamel, studded with pearls and precious stones. Icons made for the wealthy Stroganov family, inscribed with the patron's and often the artist's name, were especially prized by Old Believer connoisseurs, since this wealthy family from Solvychevodsk was reputed to have collected icons as precious works of art as well as devotional images.

It was thus a market dominated by Old Believer taste, expertise, and values that Tretiakov encountered when he decided to add a group of icons to the encyclopedic collection of Russian easel painting he had spent four decades acquiring (mentioned in chapters 5, 6, and 7). The only contemporary account we have of how Tretiakov bought his first icons comes from his fellow collector, Aleksei Bakhrushin. In his gossipy little book, *Who Collects What*, Bakhrushin described Tretiakov's visit to the exhibition of church antiquities that accompanied the Eighth Archaeological Congress of 1890.<sup>4</sup> Held in the Historical Museum on Red Square in Moscow, the exhibition assigned six of its eleven halls to icons from leading Old Believer collections, including those of the rival Moscow antique dealers Nikolai Postnikov and Ivan Silin. Bakhrushin reported:

Wishing to have in his magnificent collection examples of ancient Russian art, which could only be found in icons, [Tretiakov] wanted to buy a few representative old icons of good workmanship. For this purpose he approached N.M. Postnikov at the Archaeological Exhibition, but Nikolai Mikhailovich said that his straitened circumstances obliged him to sell his collection only in its entirety. Tretiakov didn't want this and turned instead to I.L. Silin, from whom he bought [five or six good icons for 20,000 rubles].<sup>5</sup> Afterwards Postnikov said (and I believe him completely), "I'm very glad that Tretiakov bought these icons, I'm glad because he started collecting them, and also because he bought really good worthy icons, and paid a good price for them, but at the same time he took the very best things Silin had."<sup>6</sup>

The most striking part of this account is the amount Tretiakov was willing to spend on high-quality icons, on a par with or exceeding what he was accustomed to pay for contemporary paintings. Thus, for a little sixteenth-century icon of the Igorevskaia Mother of God in a silver enamel frame he paid Silin 5,000 rubles, the same amount he had negotiated with Vasili Surikov in 1883 for his monumental history painting *The Boiarina Morozova*.<sup>7</sup> He gave 9,000 rubles for an icon of the Complete Resurrection, when just six years before the 10,000 he paid Repin for his *Procession of the Cross in Kursk Province* was "the highest sum [he] had yet paid for a single canvas."<sup>8</sup> And he gave a staggering 25,000 rubles for his first acquisition, a portable "church" or iconostasis—10,000 more than he would pay Viktor Vasnetsov for his *Tsar*



8.1. M. Dmitriev, Photograph of the interior of an Old Believer prayer room, ca. 1900, Nizhnii Novgorod.

*Ivan the Terrible* in 1897. Between 1890 and 1892 alone, he spent over 100,000 rubles to purchase some thirty icons.<sup>9</sup>

Yet while we know a good deal about Tretiakov's criteria for buying contemporary art, thanks to his voluminous correspondence with artists, all we can say for certain about his motivations for buying icons so late in his career comes from a paragraph in his Will of 6 September 1896, in which he made clear his intention that these should form part of the public collection he was developing. On his death, he wrote, "The collection of early Russian painting (icons) and books on art that remain in my apartment . . . are to be transferred to the Tretiakov Brothers' Moscow Civic Art Gallery."<sup>10</sup> Just what the "patron of the Peredvizhniki" was looking for in his icons remains a matter for speculation and even controversy.

In broad terms Tretiakov's goals were self-evident. Clearly, he was intent on buying some big names for his gallery, exceptional individuals in a largely anonymous field, who would be a worthy match for the giants of contemporary Russian painting like Repin, Surikov, and Vasnetsov. At the top of any icon collector's wish list was at least one work by Andrei Rublev, whose name had long been synonymous with the finest traditions of Russian icon painting.<sup>11</sup> Four of Tretiakov's icons thus came with assurances that they were by this legendary and elusive figure.<sup>12</sup> Two more bore the inscription "painted for Maksim Iakovlevich Stroganov," in itself considered a guarantee of the highest artistic quality. One of these, a small folding triptych of "In Thee Rejoiceth" framed by eighteen feasts, bore the signature of the painter Vasily Chirin.<sup>13</sup> Another rare "named" Stroganov icon was signed by Nikifor Savin.<sup>14</sup> At some point in the 1890s Tretiakov also acquired a pair of large allegorical icons attributed to Simon Ushakov, the great court painter of the mid seventeenth century.<sup>15</sup> The impulse to think in terms of individual artists reflected both the collector's mission of acquiring works by "all Russian artists" for his gallery, and the contemporary scholarly interest in compiling dictionaries of all known named icon painters.<sup>16</sup>

Where other icon collectors of his generation aspired to the greatest possible completeness and range of styles and periods, Tretiakov was discriminating.<sup>17</sup> His acquisitions had all the hallmarks of a top Old Believer collection. Age was of course highly prized—three icons in his collection were from the fifteenth century<sup>18</sup> and three more from the first half of the sixteenth.<sup>19</sup> The high price of the "traveling church" no doubt reflected the fact that it was an unusually early example of the small

folding iconostases that became commonplace a century later. More generally, his purchases—which included seven icons of the hymnal icon "In Thee Rejoiceth," as well as eight more in which the central icon is framed by scenes or feast days—captured the contemporary taste for artful composition and virtuosity displayed in icons with multiple figures, scenes, and eye-catching details. There were also examples that included rare and unusual subjects and figures, such as three Russian saints among the "usual figures" in the bottom deisis row of the traveling iconostasis, real historical figures whose presence signaled the preferences and allegiances of a specific patron. An otherwise unremarkable icon of St. Gerasim of Jordan would have attracted Tretiakov, it has been suggested, because he recognized in this obscure saint the hero of Leskov's moralizing tale, *Father Gerasim's Lion*.<sup>20</sup>

Beyond these observations, Tretiakov's motivations remain elusive and open to interpretation. Was he collecting icons as works of art, and thereby ushering in an entirely new attitude towards them, as Igor Grabar and others later claimed?<sup>21</sup> Or was he a typical representative of the liberal intelligentsia, for whom icons were ethnographic artifacts reflecting Russian life? In her introduction to the State Tretiakov Gallery's first icon catalogue in 1963, Valentina Antonova insisted that there was "absolutely no enthusiasm for Russian icon painting as art" discernable in Tretiakov's selections.<sup>22</sup> To impute such motives to the patron of the Peredvizhniki was an anachronism, she argued, since the very notion of the icon's aesthetic value could only emerge when Novgorod icons were cleaned early in the next century. Rather, what Tretiakov appreciated in icons was their ability to tell edifying stories—their *povestvovatel'nost'*. In support of this argument, Antonova pointed to the number of triptychs and framed icons whose wings featured scenes and figures that illuminated the central image; of icons framed in *zhitie* or *bytie* scenes—episodes in the life of the personage depicted that unfolded sequentially in time and space; and icons with especially complex multi-figured compositions that required close reading by the viewer.

There were good reasons in 1963 to assert the realist credentials of Tretiakov's icons against the highly formalist approach to early Russian painting that emerged after World War II. This was a continuation of the ideological wars that dominated Soviet art history. But Antonova also rightly acknowledged the distinctive personality of the collection; the fact that in the 1890s the systematic cleaning of icons had not yet begun; and



Tretiakov's "literary" approach to painting, for which the subsequent generation would so mercilessly critique him. Describing his icons as an "encyclopedia of Russian life," she nonetheless left unstated what it meant for Tretiakov's new acquisitions to be joining the much greater painting collection, linking together two spheres of national life.

Tretiakov was certainly sensitive to the breadth of meanings that icons had acquired by the 1890s. That he appreciated their complexity as signs of Russia past and present is quite evident from the collection of paintings he bequeathed to the nation in 1892 (and to which he planned to add his new icons, as his will attests). As contemporary photographs and catalogues reveal, in room after room of the contemporary painting installation, the icon emerged as a consistent narrative thread within the paintings, a central character even, in scenes of Russian history and contemporary life.<sup>23</sup> Like a vast diorama, the collection provided the viewer with an evolving pictorial and conceptual framework that showed the diversity of icons over time, but also a microcosm of the Russian experience.

On the threshold between Rooms 6 and 7, for example, the attentive viewer could ponder the complexities of two and a half centuries of Russian history, played out against a background of icons and often featuring icons as active protagonists (fig. 8.2). Flanking the doorway were two large paintings that Tretiakov acquired in 1885–1886, part of a sequence of canvases devoted to the history of the Great Schism, a topic of considerable public interest in the 1880s. At the upper left hung Sergei Miloradovich's *The Black Council. Solovetsky Monastery's Uprising against the New Printed Books in 1666*, while to the right was Aleksandr Litovchenko's *Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich and Nikon, Archbishop of Novgorod, before the Relics of Filipp the Miracleworker, Metropolitan of Moscow*. Such carefully painted church interiors were a staple of Russian history painting, their iconostases and frescoed walls a widely accessible metonym for the struggle between dissent and the official church. In the wake of the events that Miloradovich and Litovchenko reenacted, the Solovetsky Monastery would become a bastion of resistance to Nikon's reforms, and the Moscow Kremlin's Dormition Cathedral a backdrop for what Richard Wortman calls the Romanov dynasty's "scenarios of power."<sup>24</sup>

In the third painting in this cluster, Vasilii Surikov's depiction of Peter the Great's erstwhile crony in Siberian exile (*Menshikov in Berezovo*, 1883), icons

played a more dynamic role, standing in for Old Russia itself. Surikov adopted a favorite rhetorical device of Russian realist painters, that of visually emphasizing the tension between conflicting cultural forces. Even at a distance the extreme asymmetry of the composition embodies the gulf separating the old world (represented by the icons, books, and candles at upper right) from the forces of change that the exiled Menshikov and his family represent. Ilia Repin used a similar device in his *Tsarevna Sophia in the Novodeviche Convent* (1879), confining Peter's ambitious half sister within a claustrophobic space walled with gleaming icons. So too did Aleksei Kivshenko, in *War Council at Fili in 1812* (commissioned by Tretiakov in 1882). Cued by the path of Caravaggesque light, the viewer's eye travels from the warm light pooled beneath the icon of the Smolensk Mother of God to the shadows where Kutuzov debates whether to abandon Moscow to Napoleon. In these and other dramatic scenes from national history, icons were staple signs helping the viewer to understand the forces at work and the lessons to be absorbed.

For the Peredvizhniki, dedicated observers of the contemporary Russian scene, the ubiquity of icons in daily life offered innumerable opportunities for commentaries on the way Russians lived now. The public display of miracle-working icons was a ready-made panorama of Russian society with unparalleled opportunities for unveiling social disparity and official corruption. Powerful examples of this in Tretiakov's collection were Perov's *Easter Procession* (1861), Savitskii's *Meeting the Icon* (1878), and Repin's *Procession of the Cross in Kursk Province* (1880–1883). Icons also made poignant and pointed backdrops for the petty miseries and injustices of contemporary private life, as the Russian realists took the viewer behind closed doors to reveal an array of social ills. After Firs Zhuravlev's *Before the Betrothal* was acquired by the Alexander III museum in 1872, Tretiakov commissioned a variant of this commentary on the theme of the unwilling bride (fig. 8.3). In both versions the familial icons in their shiny modern oklads are, if not coconspirators in oppression, at least indifferent to the plight of the oppressed. Zhuravlev gives the little silver-gilt covered icon of the Kazan Mother of God a key role as instrument of the father's implacable will, placed along the diagonal axis of his gaze and articulating the spatial and psychological gap dividing him from his daughter.<sup>25</sup>

Even artists uninterested in social polemics gravitated towards the icon corner as the setting for innumerable



8.2. Unknown photographer, The Tretyakov Gallery, view from Room 7 looking into Room 6, showing installation of works by Miloradovich, Litovchenko, and Surikov, 1898.



8.3. Firs Zhuravlev, *Before the Betrothal*, 1874. Oil on canvas, 99 x 134 cm, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



scenes of popular life. In *The Sick Husband* (1881) Vasilii Maksimov invited viewers to contemplate the shelf of modest icons above the dying man's bed, in the spirit of a sympathetic ethnographer rather than an indignant Populist. Artists whose sole interest was to entertain and amuse were also magnetically drawn to the icon corner, where the family icons were served up as local color and a benign commentary on the sheer banality of human affairs. Vladimir Makovskii's *The Nightingale Fanciers* (1873) and Vasilii Meshkov's *Tooth Pulling* (1891) draw our attention to scenes so ordinary that the icons have the same status as the samovar, so familiar that they fade into the background like wallpaper.

Such images defined Tretiakov's collection as an encyclopedia in pictures of Russia past and present, its scope encompassing both the iconostases of the Kremlin cathedrals and the cheap mass-produced images of the peasantry, with all that this implied. By the 1890s, however, Tretiakov was also extending his patronage to a younger generation of artists whose view of the past and the current Russian scene were colored by new aspirations to breathe life into the past and find poetry in the present. His first icon purchases thus coincided with his patronage of a new direction in religious painting that to many promised a renaissance in the practice of icon painting itself. Since 1885 Viktor Vasnetsov and Mikhail Nesterov had been engaged in painting the interiors and icons of the new St. Vladimir's Cathedral in Kiev, and in 1893 Tretiakov bought a set of Vasnetsov's cartoons for his gallery—images of the Mother of God, Christ Pantocrator, The Only Begotten Son, and enormous ecstatic scenes of the Last Judgment. At the Peredvizhnik exhibition in 1890 he also bought Nesterov's *Vision of the Youth Bartholomew*, a highly controversial work among the older generation of Peredvizhniki precisely because it smacked too much of icon painting. This work can be glimpsed through the doorway into Room 6 (see fig. 8.2), together with two other canvases on the life of St. Sergius of Radonezh that Nesterov donated to Tretiakov in 1897–1898. Above it is the triptych *The Labors of St. Sergius*, which the artist described as a *skladen* or folding icon, a word redolent of Old Believer icons (by this date Tretiakov had acquired eight such triptychs).

As he selected icons for his gallery throughout the 1890s, Tretiakov may not have been choosing with an eye to their formal values of color and line, but nor was he seeing them as mere “stories for the illiterate,” as caricatures of Peredvizhnik realism. The addition of icons to Tretiakov's gallery was a much more intentional

act, allowing the public to visualize for the first time the full sweep of Russian painting's evolution, while at the same time providing the icons with an extraordinarily rich context that brought the full spectrum of Russian history and culture to life.

### From Private to Public (1898–1913)

It was not until after Tretiakov's death in 1898 that the icons were finally moved from his private apartments to join the main collection, which he had formally presented to the city of Moscow in 1892. A room was found for them on the second floor of the former family home on Lavrushinskii Lane and work began on preparing them for public display.

Integrating the icons into the collection was the charge of a Council appointed by the Moscow Duma and consisting of the artists Valentin Serov and Ilia Ostroukhov, and Tretiakov's daughter, Aleksandra Botkina. Tretiakov's will stipulated that his painting collection be maintained exactly as it was during his lifetime, with any new acquisitions hung separately. But the icons offered a truly unprecedented opportunity to show how examples of early Russian painting could form part of a single unfolding history of Russian art.

Ostroukhov invited the distinguished diplomat, historian, and collector Nikolai Likhachev to catalogue Tretiakov's icon collection according to the most up-to-date scholarly criteria. Likhachev had started to collect icons shortly after Tretiakov, when he bought a large chunk of Nikolai Postnikov's collection at auction. By the late 1890s he had embarked on a grandiose project to construct a full history of the icon's stylistic evolution based on the greatest possible number of examples.<sup>26</sup> Organizing Tretiakov's collection was thus a preliminary opportunity for him to publish “his ideas on the history of icon painting and miniatures.”<sup>27</sup>

The issue that most concerned Likhachev was devising reliable stylistic criteria that could be used to fit icons securely into a chronological structure, and for this he borrowed some of the fundamental tools of Old Believer connoisseurship. He selected four key visual markers to locate an icon within its period, from the early Novgorod era to the late Stroganov style: the coloration (*vokhrenie*) of faces, their shape, the delineation of drapery folds (*probelka*), and the way mountains were painted.<sup>28</sup> In Tretiakov's collection the predominance of icons from the period ca. 1550–1650 meant that Likhachev's central problem was

the identification and dating of so-called Stroganov icons, those highly coveted treasures that epitomized Old Believer taste and the height of virtuosity in the icon's stylistic evolution. Since inscriptions were integral to an icon's meaning and value, he also drew on paleographical evidence, which allowed him immediately to dismiss some of the more optimistic attributions (the Rublev and Ushakov icons).<sup>29</sup>

While Likhachev was bringing system to the collection, Ostroukhov commissioned a set of display cases from the carpentry workshop at Abramtsevo (see chapter 4).<sup>30</sup> Designed by Viktor Vasnetsov, one of Tretiakov's favorite artists and himself a collector of icons, the cases were a restrained version of the highly ornamented neo-Russian style that Abramtsevo had made popular (fig. 8.4). Vasnetsov's framing of the icons, together with Ostroukhov's careful symmetrical hanging and generous spacing, gave the Tretiakov Gallery's icon room an ambiance quite distinct from the rest of the galleries, where paintings were packed cheek by jowl, Salon style. The installation reflected a lingering theatricality associated with workshops like Abramtsevo, together with a desire to preserve some memory of the icons' original context, be it an Old Believer prayer room or the icon corner in a northern *izba*. In 1904, however, this approach to linking the Russian past and present through the design of space was already losing its freshness and novelty. What really signaled a sea change in public perception, however, was that almost overnight, Tretiakov's icons became old-fashioned.

In retrospect, this dramatic change in the perception of Tretiakov's icons seems to stem from various coincidences at the time. In 1904 the Archaeological Institute, under Ostroukhov's direction, cleaned Rublev's icon of the Old Testament Trinity, revealing the first real glimpse of the legendary artist; in the process, the oklad given by Boris Godunov was permanently removed. The following year, Nicholas II issued the Edict of Toleration, which brought the official persecution of Old Believers to an end and allowed communities to build their own churches furnished with church-size icons. In conjunction with these developments, a boom in private collecting took off, leading to a new generation of collectors, among them Stepan Riabushinskii, Aleksei Morozov, and Ostroukhov himself. Finally, experiments in cleaning Novgorod icons revealed an unsuspected world of color and form that cast the miniature Stroganov icons that Tretiakov had favored in the shade.

In this period of abundant opportunities for acquiring icons from earlier centuries, the Tretiakov collection remained static. Not a single icon was added between his death and 1917, so that with every year the disparity between the taste of the 1890s and the rapidly expanding state of knowledge intensified. It is not entirely clear why the Council of the Tretiakov Gallery held back from what must have been a great temptation to take advantage of the new market, particularly as Ostroukhov, the gallery's trustee until 1913, was a passionate collector himself. Perhaps, as Grabar said, it was a purely economic decision, the council's limited acquisitions budget obliging them to make hard choices between rare eighteenth-century classics, icons, and contemporary art.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps it was the inflated prices resulting from the competition among a new set of collectors, or perhaps Ostroukhov's preoccupation with building his own collection played a part.<sup>32</sup> Whatever the reason, it was the only part of the collection not involved in the controversial debates surrounding new acquisitions at the time, and the incorporation of those new pieces into Tretiakov's original collection.<sup>33</sup> Certainly, when Grabar rehung the collection in 1913, Tretiakov's icons enabled him to present the gallery as a collection of Russian artists "from earliest times to the end of the nineteenth century." The visitor, "moving from left to right through the rooms of the second floor, would become familiar with the entire complex process of the organic development of Russian art."<sup>34</sup> Yet this claim to ever-expanded inclusiveness was hard to sustain with a collection of icons that remained ossified in the Muscovite era.

The enforced stasis of Tretiakov's icons is especially noticeable when compared with the rising profile of Nikolai Likhachev's collection. It was Likhachev whom Sergei Diaghilev approached to borrow thirty-five icons for the Russian exhibition at the 1906 Salon d'Automne in Paris (see chapter 9), which he described as "a look at the development of our art as seen by the modern eye."<sup>35</sup> Diaghilev insisted that these icons be displayed on a wall of gold brocade—a prefiguration of so many later exhibitions designed to heighten the sensory context of the experience.<sup>36</sup> Equally significant was Diaghilev's omission of the Peredvizhniki from the exhibition, a calculated affront to Tretiakov's legacy and a sign that new histories of Russian art could be written that did not necessarily conform to the model laid out in the halls of the Tretiakov Gallery.

One should not exaggerate the speed of this change in critical opinion. Until World War I, at

8.4. Unknown photographer, Vitrines to house Pavel Tretiakov's icon collection, designed by Viktor Vasnetsov and made at the Abramtsevo Carpentry Workshop, 1904. (redacted until 2024)

least, Tretiakov's icons were still highly regarded as exceptional examples of the Muscovite and Stroganov styles, and when Matisse visited the gallery in 1911 he spent an enjoyable hour or so with Ostroukhov "opening all the glass doors of the cupboards."<sup>37</sup> Above all, the taste for icons of the seventeenth century received a huge official boost in court circles during the celebrations for the Romanov Tercentenary of 1913. Yet 1913 was also the definitive year in which the map of the Russian icon's history was redrawn, pushing icons of Tretiakov's era to the periphery.

### Demotion (1913–1930)

Around 1913 the public discussion of icons took a sharp turn. Tretiakov's icons were drawn into a public forum about icons that became increasingly polemical. Critical in this respect was the exhibition of icons from private collections held at the Delovoi Dvor on Varvarka Street in Moscow, a grand public unveiling of newly cleaned Novgorod icons in all their splendor. Novgorod icons had been dreamed about, but never seen in their original form, covered as they were by the layers of subsequent centuries. Inevitably, therefore, those later centuries began to suffer by invidious comparison. The very act of cleaning involved a decision to sacrifice later historical layers in search of a superior original image.

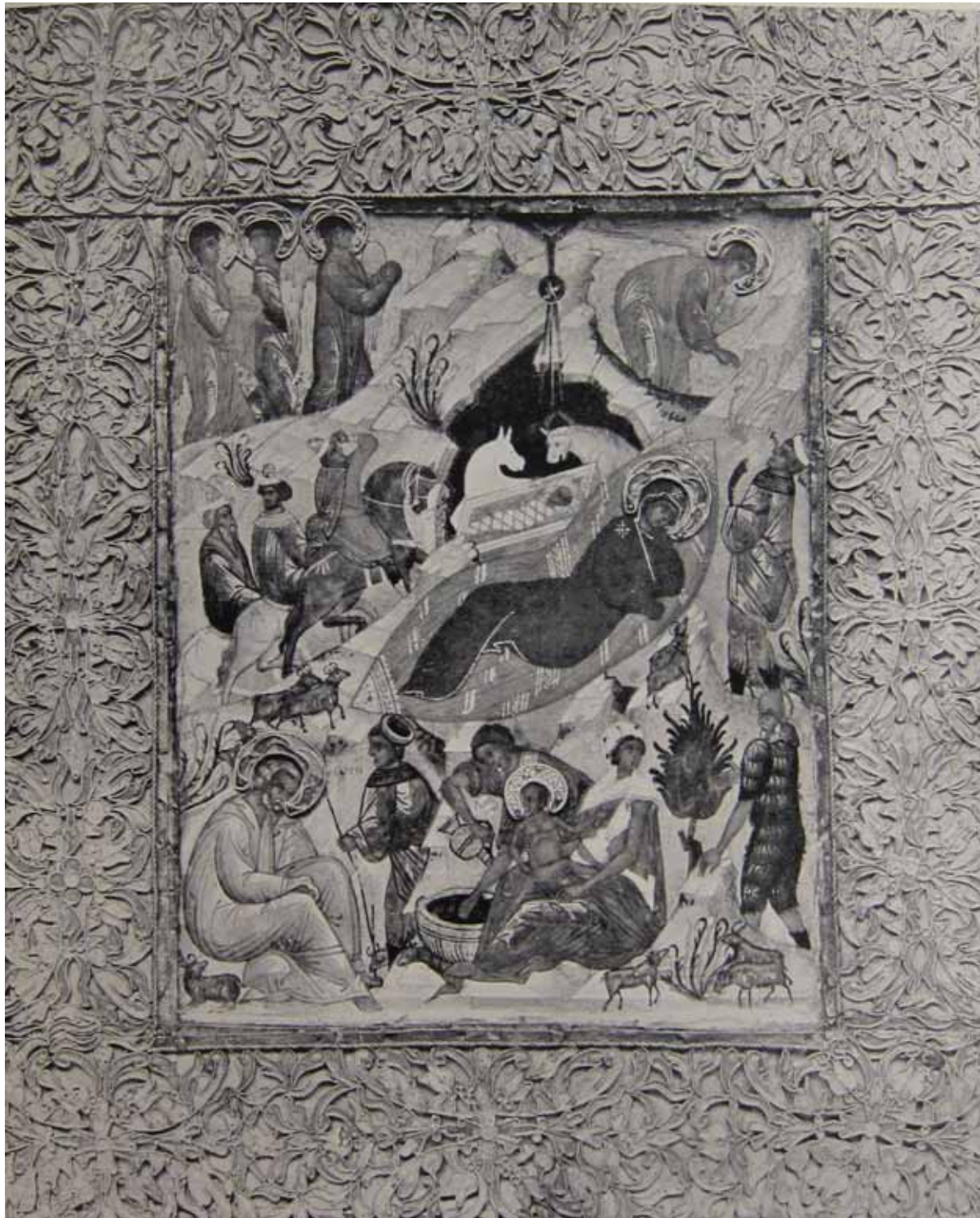
The young critic Pavel Muratov became the most articulate spokesman for this new position. A passionate advocate of Novgorod icons as "the only manifestation of high art in the entire history of early Russian painting," Muratov's contribution to volume six of the new *History of Russian Art* (1909–1916) edited by Igor Grabar was instrumental in reassessing the icon's history in light of recent discoveries, characterizing the Moscow period in general and the Stroganov school in particular as one of slow decline in a great artistic tradition. Icons that had once seemed exquisite, virtuosic, and teeming with interest, invention, and event, were now more likely to seem fussy and overembellished, requiring no aesthetic sensibility to appreciate. "Anyone can be astonished by the painstaking execution of Stroganov miniatures," Muratov wrote. "This quality is more comprehensible and accessible than any other purely artistic quality of the early icon. Even someone entirely lacking in artistic receptiveness could take delight in the exceptionally fine draftsmanship and execution of the Stroganov

miniature-work (*melkaia*) icon."<sup>38</sup> The same theme ran through his catalogue of Ostroukhov's collection, in which he compared the new breed of collector with those of the past, who had focused on "icons small in size and of particularly painstaking execution, unable to comprehend the beauty of Novgorod painting and acknowledging only their historical value, with a false idea of Rublev as a master of tenderly shaded 'flowing' icon painting and an exaggerated delight in the refined miniatures of the Stroganov school."<sup>39</sup>

In Grabar's *History*, Muratov included nine icons from Tretiakov's collection to help illustrate his theory. In Tretiakov's very first purchase, the early sixteenth-century traveling iconostasis, Muratov believed he could still glimpse "the aesthetic theme shining through the religious theme," but thereafter a process of decline set in where formal, painterly values were increasingly sacrificed to narrative in Tretiakov's choices. The painter of Tretiakov's Nativity (fig. 8.5) was "not so much concerned with the picture quality and strict coherence of the impression it made, as preoccupied with various picturesque episodes; he sacrifices the proportion of the figures and the rhythm of the composition, but cannot bring himself to sacrifice a single one of the many 'grasses' and the goats nibbling at them."<sup>40</sup> A Crucifixion with two saints on the borders from the time of Boris Godunov (ca. 1570) showed the "illustrative and literary traditions of Godunov's reign, for example in the inclusion of three men playing 'v morru' [a finger guessing game] at the foot of the cross."<sup>41</sup> This process of deterioration culminated in a little icon of Saints Vasilii the Blessed and Artemii Verkolskii, probably painted in the last years of Mikhail Fedorovich's reign (r. 1613–1645), which was essentially "just a magnificent calligraphic pattern. The icon painter who painted it was preoccupied with decoration and utterly indifferent to representation. The artistic center of this work is the beautiful star-shaped golden grasses rising above the feathery patterned mountains."

What was new in Muratov's writings of 1913–1915 was not the chronology of icon painting, but the critical vocabulary he coined for reevaluating its highs and lows. Whereas for the Novgorod icon painter "the theme of the icon was his painterly vision, for the Stroganov master it was only the theme of adornment, where his devotion was measured by the refinement of his eye and the skill of his hand, earned through long and self-sacrificing labor."<sup>42</sup> This virtuosity indicated a "minor art" akin to the jeweled oklads that framed the images and the adornments





8.5. Icon of the Nativity, second half of the sixteenth century.  
Tempera on panel, silver and enamel oklad and haloes, 32 x  
26 cm, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



that interfered with contemplation of the painting itself. For Muratov (and other young critics like Nikolai Shchekotov and Aleksandr Anisimov), the discovery of Novgorod icons was Russia's chance to be part of world art, not a mere local variant. Through them lay Russia's true path back to Byzantium and thus to Hellenic culture, rather than the false path to the Italian Renaissance mapped out by older scholars. There may also have been an ideological dimension to these young critics' rejection of Muscovite icons: a distaste for the notion of Republican Novgorod's subjugation to the Muscovite state in the sixteenth century, an emblem of which was the imposition of state controls on icon painters.

The last prerevolutionary report on Tretiakov's icons, written by Ukrainian artist Aleksei Grishchenko in 1916, provides an important contemporary document for understanding the Russian avant-garde's embrace of icons. Grishchenko's lively and opinionated account of how he and his generation came to discover icons is equally useful for explaining the polemical necessity of demoting Muscovite and Stroganov icons of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from the supremacy they enjoyed in the nineteenth century. Along with other kinds of "realism," they were added to the cultural baggage thrown overboard from the steamship of modernity.

Grishchenko quite specifically targeted Tretiakov as the worst kind of nineteenth-century icon collector: far from being a shrewd judge of quality, he was now a man indifferent to the superior beauties of Novgorod icons (a nonsensical charge, given that the collector had been dead a good decade before the work on cleaning Novgorod icons got underway). Among Grishchenko's thumbnail introductions to Moscow's private and public museum collections, his comments on Tretiakov's icons were dismissive and openly tendentious:

It would be a great mistake to judge early Russian painting by Tretiakov's collection. . . . The seventeenth century of Stroganov and Moscow styles, the latest and least interesting epoch of early Russian art, is the most fully represented. [. . .] The fact that his collection consists for the most part of seventeenth-century Stroganov and Moscow icons, whose principal content is "storytelling," "complexity," "correct drawing," "fine-work," and "extraordinary execution" is the real reason why the Novgorod icon—the antipode of the Stroganov—did not end up in the late Tretiakov's collection.<sup>43</sup>

For Grishchenko, the taste of Tretiakov the icon collector was inseparable from that of Tretiakov the "patron of the Peredvizhniki." He made a grudging effort to point out the few icons of passing interest—a small Pokrov, for instance, that might be early fifteenth-century Novgorod ("broadly painted with bright strong colors applied with a feel for color, the rhythm of the composition"). But all the Stroganov icons exemplified a "complete absence of painting and feel for color."<sup>44</sup> In the Complete Resurrection painted for Maksim Stroganov, Grishchenko professed to see merely "an utter confusion of specks and garments, a multitude of faces and gold scrolls, where the dead colors have a faded ochre tinge." Stroganov icons awakened the kind of almost visceral distress that Salon or Victorian painting elicited in modernist circles—even the green used for the ground and borders struck Grishchenko as unpleasant.

From the Novgorod church, full of grandeur and import, furnished with broad-painted icons, we find ourselves in the cramped little prayer-room of the Stroganovs, a sort of house chapel, where miniature icons sparkle with gold and an abundance of assiduously delineated forms, where the eye, sliding at close range over the richly elegant surface, strains to make out the tiniest detail of the miniature figures, where there's more room for astonishment than for the experience of élan, transport, and creative delight.<sup>45</sup>

That Muscovite icons were caught in the crossfire of a much bigger campaign was clear from Grishchenko's snide comments directed at Repin, Kramskoi, and Tretiakov himself. "The struggle in Russia for new painterly ideals," he claimed, "was and is at the same time the struggle to discover new horizons in the evaluation of early Russian painting."<sup>46</sup> If nineteenth-century realists naturally gravitated toward "everyday life, a specific vulgar subject, and ethnography," both in contemporary painting and in icons, then it was just as natural to discern an inner resonance between the contemporary art of the French Republic and that of the Novgorod Republic, "united by that facet of artistic culture that was oriented to painterly culture (color, composition, texture)."<sup>47</sup> In Cézanne's paintings and Novgorod icons alike, "the verbal story is reduced to zero."<sup>48</sup> "People who approached academic conventions, routine and naked everyday reality with loathing all felt the greatest interest in the art of the early icon painters, *they understood and appreciated the artistic side of the icon above all else* [Grishchenko's emphasis]."<sup>49</sup>

In developing his history of Russian icons, Grishchenko was developing an idiosyncratic form of reception theory, whereby the aesthetic habits of the present generation enabled it to appreciate what was dismissed before and, conversely, made almost repellant the cultural heights of the past. “[The best period of Novgorod] speaks to our *plastic* perceptual apparatus, and not our verbal, narrative one . . . not by the word but by painterly and plastic means, *by colors and composition*.”<sup>50</sup> Even after they were cleaned, Novgorod icons could only be seen and understood by eyes prepared by exposure to modern French painting—they remained a closed book to the intelligentsia and the Peredvizhniki of Tretiakov’s generation. The laws of generational struggle meant that the patron of the Peredvizhniki was destined to esteem Stroganov icons above all others, because his “perceptual apparatus” was tuned to the verbal and narrative. “Their exclusive aspiration towards the ‘subject,’ to ethnographically correct ‘genre paintings,’ to geographically precise, clumsy landscapes, their leathery dead-blind palette, amateurish ‘natural technique’ and execution created an atmosphere of extreme contempt for icon painting.”<sup>51</sup> By this standard, Muscovite and Stroganov icons were no more “early Russian painting” than the canvases of Kramskoi or Repin were paintings. Both led the viewer along the “long path of literary verbal story-telling.”<sup>52</sup> Young Russian artists might now be going to Moscow collections of French modernism and ancient icons with equal enthusiasm—but, Grishchenko implied, the Tretiakov Gallery was not on that itinerary.

This irascible criticism shows a world of values in flux, a history of Russian art still in the making, the sort of internecine warfare that has become quite familiar in the Cubo-Futurists’ battles against Repin or Alexandre Benois, but that seems rather shocking in the sedate world of medieval painting. Tretiakov’s icons could not satisfy the aesthetic criteria of the new school of critics and artists, not only because they were tainted by the collector’s Peredvizhnik associations, but because to appreciate them, it seemed, one had to see with Peredvizhnik-trained eyes, attuned to storytelling and trivial earth-bound details. To value earlier icons required aesthetic habits shaped by exposure to more recent art. Emblematic of this trend, for Grishchenko, was the role that French scholar Gabriel Millet had played in opening his contemporaries’ eyes to the aesthetic qualities of Byzantine art, likening the frescoes at Mistra to the divided tones of impressionist painting.<sup>53</sup>

In this climate of strident black-and-white oppositions, the subtle gradations of the 1890s in which Tretiakov had collected his icons were lost. His icons represented a perfect time capsule of that decade, hermetically sealed in their whimsical Abramtsevo frames, positioned against the panorama of the bigger collection. Like so many other aspects of late nineteenth-century culture, they proved impossible for the next generation to value.

## Conclusion

The seal on Tretiakov’s icon collection was finally broken in 1917, when the Council of the Tretiakov Gallery acquired a thirteenth-century Pskov icon of Selected Saints for 15,000 rubles from Ivan Silin’s son.<sup>54</sup> After a second major acquisition in 1921, a sixteenth-century icon of the Church Militant, the collection relapsed again into dormancy throughout the 1920s, when the profile of the gallery was confined to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century painting (between 1924 and 1929 it was the Historical Museum in Moscow that functioned as the capital’s central repository of icons and church art). During these years, it seems, Tretiakov’s icons were put in storage, until Grabar retrieved a handful to include in the Soviet loan exhibition that toured Germany, England, and the United States from 1929 to 1932.<sup>55</sup> His official rationale for including them was not their quality, but the fact that other icons from private collections might raise problems in émigré circles. He described them as coming from “a collection that had been in storage for a number of years and inaccessible for viewing.”<sup>56</sup>

In 1929 a shift in museum policy mandated that henceforth the Tretiakov Gallery would serve as the national center for Russian fine art. Hundreds of the best icons were transferred from the Historical Museum and supplemented with hundreds more from the State Museum Fund and the growing number of closed churches. In 1930 the State Tretiakov Gallery’s Department of Early Russian Painting was officially opened. Throughout this period of turmoil Tretiakov’s original collection retained its integrity, even in the face of unrelenting pressure to sell national heritage abroad in the 1930s. Only one work—an icon of St. Makarii of Egypt and St. Makarii of Alexandria that Tretiakov had acquired as a possible Rublev—was inadvertently released to the trade organization Antikvariat and sold to the Pittsburgh industrialist George Hann in 1936.<sup>57</sup> By 1963,

when the first major catalogue of the Tretyakov Gallery icons was compiled, almost all of the original icons were integrated into the greatly expanded collection, their illustrious provenance quietly downplayed.

Though today we can only experience Tretyakov's collection of icons through a process of virtual reconstruction, it is more than just a quaint minor relic of the 1890s. The story of its fall from grace during the avant-garde polemics of the prerevolutionary decade is one that applies to any number of late nineteenth-century cultural phenomena, ruthlessly demoted for their storytelling, illustrative tendencies, and the apparent predominance of the verbal over the visual. The strength of the prejudice against Tretyakov's taste in icons can still be seen in the resistance to adopting the miniature, multi-figured style for contemporary icons.<sup>58</sup> Yet in post-Soviet Russia, taste and demand are again in flux. Stroganov icons are in demand among collectors as they were in the nineteenth century, and the miniature technique is now a permissible model for new icons.

## Notes

1. A. Grishchenko, *Voprosy zhivopisi. Vypusk 3-i. Russkaia ikona kak iskusstvo zhivopisi* (Moscow: Avtora, 1917), 258.

2. Of the original 62 icons described in Nikolai Likhachev's 1905 catalogue, 47 are included among the 1,053 in the most recent complete catalogue of the State Tretyakov Gallery's collection. See *Kratkoe opisaniie ikon sobraniia P. M. Tretyakova* (Moscow: Sinodal'naia tipografiia, 1905); and V.I. Antonova and N.E. Mneva, *Katalog drevnerusskoi zhivopisi v dvukh tomakh* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1963). To date I have found reproductions of 21 of the icons, most of them in prerevolutionary sources.

3. See the excerpts from these writers and commentaries on them in Valerii Lepakhin, *Ikona v russkoi khudozhestvennoi literature. Ikona i ikonopochitanie, ikonopis' i ikonopistsy* (Moscow: Otchii dom, 2002), 217–315.

4. On the importance of this exhibition, see G.I. Vzdornov in *Istoriia otkrytiia i izucheniia russkoi srednevekovoi zhivopisi. XIX vek* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1986), 206–7.

5. Silin's information, presumably based on hearsay, does not tally with the prices cited by Likhachev and Antonova (see below).

6. *Iz zapisnoi knizhki A. P. Bakhrushina. Kto*

*chto sobiraet* (Moscow: L.E. Bukhgeim, 1916), 65, 66, 67. All subsequent accounts of how Tretyakov came to collect icons—and they are very few—are based on this brief entry.

7. Letter to P.M. Tretyakov, 4 May 1883, in V. Surikov. *Pis'ma, Vospominaniia o khudozhnike* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1977), 55.

8. Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier, *Ilya Repin and the World of Russian Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 107. Elsewhere Valkenier cites another aspect of Tretyakov's patronage: "the fact that he would pay more for a painting on a religious subject. Thus Perov received 2,000 rubles for his *Bird Catcher* (1870) and 8,000 for his *Nikita Pustosviat* (1881), the representation of a saintly hermit." See Elizabeth Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art. The State and Society: The Peredvizhniki and Their Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 68.

9. This means that almost one-eighth of the 839,000 rubles he spent on art between 1871 and 1897 went on icons (Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 65). Even among icon collectors this was an exceptional amount. According to Ivan Zabelin, in 1889 Postnikov asked 700,000 rubles for his 3,000-object collection (1,000 of which were icons), dropping the price to 400,000 in 1895. See Ivan Zabelin, *Dnevnik. Zapisnye knizhki* (Moscow: Izd. im. Sabashnikovykh, 2001), 141, 190. In 1913 Nikolai Likhachev received 300,000 rubles when he sold his entire collection of some 1,500 icons to the Russian Museum. See L.G. Klimanov, "Nikolai Petrovich Likhachev—kollektzioner 'skazochnogo razmakha,'" in *Iz kolleksii N.P. Likhacheva. Katalog vystavki v Gosudarstvennom Russkom Muzei* (St. Petersburg: Seda-S, 1993), 24. The details of Tretyakov's icon collecting—prices, dates, provenance—are vague. Likhachev provided some information in his 1905 catalogue and Antonova expanded on this in the 1963 catalogue of the collection, drawing on an archival source (TsGALI, f. 646, op. 1, no. 194). From this same document Antonova cited the distribution of his initial purchase as follows: "65,000 to Silin, 35,000 to S.A. Egorov, and the remainder to Nikolai Postnikov." See Antonova and Mneva, *Katalog drevnerusskoi zhivopisi*, 1:17.

10. "Dukhovnoe zaveshchanie P.M. Tretyakova," in *Gosudarstvennaia Tretyakovskaia galereiia. Ocherki istorii 1856–1917*, ed. Ia. V. Bruk (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1981), 306.

11. Nikolai Postnikov wrote that his own collecting stemmed from a desire to preserve the great

works of “the Rublevs, Stroganovs, Ushakovs and other great artists and teachers of their stamp, working in the knowledge that theirs is a sacred charge and a lofty task, requiring a cheerful mind, chaste thoughts, a sober heart.” See *Katalog khristianskikh drevnostei sobrannykh Moskovskim kuptsom Nikolaem Mikhailovichym Postnikovym* (Moscow: Kushnerev i Ko, 1888), i.

12. Two came from Nikolai Postnikov, and Tretiakov must have acquired them when the dealer was obliged to sell his vast collection at auction in the 1890s. See Antonova and Mneva, *Katalog drevnerusskoi zhivopisi*, 17.

13. Nos. 800 and 802 in Antonova and Mneva, *Katalog drevnerusskoi zhivopisi*, vol. 2. These icons are two of just thirty icons known to have been painted for Maxim Iakovlevich Stroganov. See M.S. Trubacheva, “Po povelenniu Maksima Iakovlevicha Stroganova . . .” in *Ikony stroganovskikh votchin XVI–XVII vekov po materialam restavratsionnykh rabot VKhNRTs imeni Akademika I.E. Grabaria. Katalog-Al’bom* (Moscow: Skanrus, 2003), 359.

14. No. 793 The Good Fruits of Instruction.

15. Nos. 59 and 60 in the 1905 catalogue. Likhachev dismissed their inscriptions as obvious modern fakes (*Kratkoe opisaniie ikon*, 46.) These icons are not included in the 1963 State Tretiakov Gallery catalogue.

16. A dictionary formed part of Dmitrii Rovinskii’s *Obozreniie ikonopisaniia v Rossii do kontsa XVII veka* (St. Petersburg, 1856). Icon painters were also included in Nikolai Sobko’s *Slovar’ russkikh khudozhnikov*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg: Tip. M.M. Stasiulevicha, 1893–1899).

17. Compare Tretiakov’s 62 icons with Postnikov’s 3,000, Nikolai Likhachev’s 1,500, and Egorov’s 1,300. L.G. Klimanov comments that the definition of “completeness” depends on the collector. For Likhachev, the success of his project depended on having all the styles (*pis’ma*) of icon painting fully represented, as essentials parts of a whole. See Klimanov, “Nikolai Petrovich Likhachev—kollektzioner ‘skazoch’nogo razmakha,’” 14.

18. No. 80 King of Kings, No. 265 Igorevskaiia Mother of God, No. 269 Four Evangelists.

19. No. 343 Nativity, No. 354 Crucifixion, No. 581 Pokrov.

20. Antonova points this out in her excellent discussion of Leskov’s particular importance for Tretiakov. Other works she cites as sparking Tretiakov’s interest in icons as part of Old Believer culture are

Melnikov-Pecherskii’s epic *In the Forest and In the Hills* and Mordovtsev’s historical novel *The Great Schism*. See Antonova and Mneva, *Katalog drevnerusskoi zhivopisi*, 1:18, 20.

21. “[Tretiakov] was the first among collectors to select icons not for their subject but for their artistic significance and was the first to openly acknowledge them as genuine and great art, stating in his Will that his icon collection should be merged with the gallery. For the first time the Russian icon occupied its proper place.” See Grabar’s introduction to the 1917 Tretiakov Gallery catalogue, cited in Antonova and Mneva, *Katalog drevnerusskoi zhivopisi*, 1:26. Lidia Iovleva makes the same point in “Galereiia bez Tret’iakov,” *Nashe nasledie*, 78 (2006).

22. Antonova and Mneva, *Katalog drevnerusskoi zhivopisi*, 1:25. Antonova specifically mentioned claims by Nikolai Likhachev and Igor Grabar that Tretiakov was the first to collect icons as works of art, a role that she attributed instead to Ilia Ostroukhov.

23. This is consistent with the observation that Leskov was “perhaps the only writer in world literature who created a work of art whose main hero is an icon.” See Lepakhin, *Ikona v russkoi khudozhestvennoi literature*, 282.

24. Litovchenko worked directly in the Dormition Cathedral and the Armory, sketching details for his painting. He allowed himself a lapse from strict accuracy by “painting the interior of the cathedral and the silver coffin as they were in the nineteenth century. The noted critic Vladimir Stasov posed for the figure of Nikon.” The painting was restored and put back on view in the Tretiakov Gallery in 2009. See “Vystavka risunkov I.E. Repina i otrestavrirovannoi kartiny A.D. Litovchenko s 10 fevralia po 30 apreliia 2009,” <<http://www.museum.ru/N35685>> (accessed 10 October 2011). On the staging of imperial events, see Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994, 2000).

25. In the first version (1872), the wedding icon of the Kazan Mother of God is already in the father’s hand; in the Tretiakov version the icon still stands beside the bread and salt awaiting his blessing.

26. The result was N.P. Likhachev, *Materialy dlia istorii russkogo ikonopisaniia. Atlas snimkov*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg: Ekspeditsiia zagotovleniia gos. bumag, 1906).

27. Quoted in Klimanov, “Nikolai Petrovich Likhachev—kollektzioner ‘skazoch’nogo razmakha,’” 23.

28. Likhachev, *Kratkoe opisaniie ikon*, iv–v.



29. Likhachev's skeptical approach to signatures was well founded. See the examples he cites in *Tsarskii "izograf" Iosif i ego ikony* (St. Petersburg: Ekspeditsiia zagotovleniia gos. bumag, 1897), 12–13. Likhachev's use of paleographic evidence was later dismissed by Aleksei Grishchenko as an example of the "archaeological" approach that ignored the formal evidence in favor of the verbal in Grishchenko, *Voprosy zhivopisi*, 174).

30. See Wendy Salmond, *Arts and Crafts in Late Imperial Russia: Reviving the Kustar Art Industries 1870–1917* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 15–45; Oleg Tarasov, *Framing Russian Art. From Early Icons to Malevich* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), 195.

31. Writing on behalf of the council in 1915, Grabar regretted that neither icons nor examples of embroidery had been acquired, since "to our very great regret what we let go during this time is lost to us forever." See *Gosudarstvennaia Tret'iakovskaia galereiia. Ocherki istorii 1856–1917*, 324.

32. It was in the library of the Tretiakov Gallery in 1910 that Grabar reported being "a witness to the secret visits of some people bringing and taking away icons in the wee hours," and in particular to some shady deals pulled off by Ostroukhov, in I.E. Grabar, *Moia zhizn'. Avtomonografiia* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1937), 216.

33. See Lidiia Iovleva, "Galereiia bez Tretiakova," *Nashe nasledie*, 78 (2006). On the controversy surrounding the rehang and new acquisitions, see *Gosudarstvennaia Tret'iakovskaia galereiia. Ocherki istorii 1856–1917*, 316–29.

34. *Gosudarstvennaia Tret'iakovskaia galereiia. Ocherki istorii 1856–1917*, 318–19.

35. Serge Diaghilev, [Introduction], *Salon d'automne. Exposition de l'Art Russe* (Paris, 1906), 7.

36. Alexander Benois was unimpressed by Diaghilev's "fairly outlandish idea of arranging ancient icons, not on some sort of neutral background, but on a shimmering gold brocade, covering from top to bottom the large hall that began the exhibition." *Sergei Diaghilev i russkoe iskusstvo: Stat'i, otkrytye pis'ma, interv'iu, perepiska, sovremenniki o Diaghileve*, ed. I.S. Zil'bershtein and V.A. Samkov (Moscow: Izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo, 1982), 2:233.

37. Yu.A. Rusakov and John E. Bowl, "Matisse in Russia in the Autumn of 1911," *The Burlington Magazine*, 117, no. 866 (May 1975): 289.

38. Pavel Muratov, "Russkaia zhivopis' do serediny 17-ogo veka," in *Istoriia russkogo iskusstva* (Moscow: Knebel, 1914), 6:37.

39. Muratov, *Drevnerusskaia zhivopis' v sobranii I.S. Ostroukhova* (Moscow, 1914), 4.

40. Muratov, "Russkaia zhivopis' do serediny 17-ogo veka," 300.

41. Muratov, "Russkaia zhivopis' do serediny 17-ogo veka," 318, fig. 321.

42. Muratov, "Russkaia zhivopis' do serediny 17-ogo veka," 360.

43. Grishchenko, *Voprosy zhivopisi*, 212

44. Grishchenko, *Voprosy zhivopisi*, 213.

45. Grishchenko, *Voprosy zhivopisi*, 107.

46. Grishchenko, *Voprosy zhivopisi*, 212.

47. Grishchenko, *Voprosy zhivopisi*, 240.

48. Grishchenko, *Voprosy zhivopisi*, 241.

49. Grishchenko, *Voprosy zhivopisi*, 244.

50. Grishchenko, *Voprosy zhivopisi*, 42.

51. Grishchenko, *Voprosy zhivopisi*, 15.

52. Grishchenko, *Voprosy zhivopisi*, 245.

53. Grishchenko, *Voprosy zhivopisi*, 255. See G. Millet, *Monuments byzantins de Mistra: Matériaux pour l'étude de l'architecture et de la peinture en Grèce aux XIVe et XVe siècles* (Paris: Leroux, 1910).

54. Inexplicably, since this icon is now acknowledged as one of the Tretiakov Gallery's masterpieces, Grishchenko's evaluation of it was scathing: "why has the Tretiakov gallery, which has spent major capital on acquiring paintings by artists whose work is richly represented in the gallery, still not acquired a single good icon? Wouldn't it be better, instead of a portrait by Levitskii (12,000 rubles), to acquire a real Novgorod icon?" [214].

55. On the exhibition see Wendy Salmond, "How America Discovered Russian Icons: The Soviet Loan Exhibition of 1930–1932," in *Alter Icons: The Russian Icon and Modernity*, ed. Jefferson J.A. Gatrall and Douglas Greenfield (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 128–43.

56. Grabar to Glavnauka (the central administration for scholarly activities 1922–1933), 14–15 January 1929, GTG, f. 106, 529. Three icons were reproduced in the deluxe edition *Masterpieces of Russian Painting* edited by Michael Farbman (London: A. Zwemmer, 1930): Plates XXXIV Crucifixion, XLIV Nativity, XLIV Praise with Festivals. The five others sent on tour were the Pokrov, Vasilii the Blessed, and Artemii Verkolskii, Nikifor Savin's The Good Fruits of Instruction, and Aleksii Metropolitan of Moscow.

57. See Wendy Salmond, "Russian Icons and American Money," in *Treasure into Tractors. The Selling of Russia's Cultural Heritage, 1918–1938*, ed.



Anne Odom and Wendy Salmond (Washington, DC: Hillwood Museum and Gardens, 2009), 273–304.

58. Thus, a contemporary website reports that, “L.I. Lifshits was one of the first art historians to protest the widely held point of view that contemporary icon painting must orient itself to the art of the ninth through fifteenth centuries as the most theologically justified, able to express spiritual reality most precisely, i.e. he asserted the right to exist of ‘fine-work’ icons with allegorical depictions, the canonical nature of which is still being debated today.” See *Moskovskaia ikona kontsa XX veka* <<http://rsvetal.narod.ru/dip12.htm#a2>> [accessed 10 October 2011].